Q Z X

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EDITOR'S NOTES

K5XY

I am sure that most of you have noticed that last month I redesigned QZX a bit. It was actually much more work than I expected because the wordprocessing program has rather more glitches in it than I would expect. It particularly did not want to save my work at the time I wanted it to. Also I could not get the facing page features to work. I may solve that problem yet. I hope and expect that this issue will go together much faster. I hesitated before redesigning the cover because I had rather liked the letters made of letters featured in the QZX. But this new look is rather more modern and eyecatching.

Last month I mentioned that there was a computerfest planned which would feature some Sinclair activity even if it were not composed only of Sinclair related activities. I have received word from the Dayton Microcomputer Association that plans for the fest are under way and that the dates are set for August 29 and 30. The association has an active Sinclair group with Gary Granger as Chairman. He is already planning Sinclair related activities for this Computerfest.

I received a copy of a new (or rather continued under new management) newsletter the other day. It is called the FDD Newsletter and is devoted to the FDD disc data storage system which was built in Portugal for the Timex systems. It was quite a good storage system and one of the first to appear. It featured the TOS (Timex Operating System) and even allows our computers to run CP/M programs. The issue I received ran to 22 pages and featured the spec sheets on the Western Digital WD1770 floppy cisk controller chip. There was lots of good information on how to formate floppy disks to meet the requirements of a variety of disk types and different operating systems.

I have finally gotten my packet station back on the air after over a year off. My packet address is K5XY@K5DI. I check into this BBS every day and welcome messages from QZX readers.

UNCLASSIFIED ADS

WANTED: UNCLASSIFIED ADS for publication in QZX. Cost is 1 cent for each keystroke (characters, blanks, etc.). Payment must be included with order. This is an excellent way to sell your program or unwanted equipment, ask for help, or find a specific program. Send your ad with payment to QZX, 2025 O'Donnell, Las Cruces, NM 88001.

FREE: One Byte-Back M 16 16 K RAM (no printed circuit board on the feed through socket). Contributed by KA8THG. As is. It would be appreciated if a contribution toward the mailing expenses were made. Send requests to QZX, 2025 O'Donnell, Las Cruces, NM 88001.

FOR SALE: Timex 1000 with power supply, instruction book, and 16 K RAM. As is. $9 (plus $2 for shipping). Also TS2068 Morse Code Translator tape. $2

including shipping. Alex. F. Burr, 2025 O'Donnell, Las Cruces, NM 88001.

QZX Discount: 15% discount on all orders mentioning QZX. T & C Services (address in ad in this issue).

FOR SALE: CP/M Books. Almost new. Half price. THE PROGRAMMER'S CP/M HANDBOOK by Andy Johnson-Laird. Osborne. Hardback 500 pages. $19. THE BYTE GUIDE TO CP/M by Mark Dahmke. McGraw Hill $8.50. 250 pages. CP/M USERS GUIDE by Thom Hogan. Osborne $8.95. 330 pages. THE CP/M PLUS HANDBOOK by Alan R. Miller. Sybex. 250 pages. $7.90. INSIDE CP/M PLUS by David E. Cortesi. Holt-Rinehart. 260 pages. $9.25. CP/M BIBLE by Waite and Angermeyer. Howard Sams. 430 pages. $9.90. USERS GUIDE TO CP/M SYSTEMS by Bove and Rhodes. Baen. 300 pages. $4.50. $1.00 each shipping and handling. A. F. Burr, 2025 O'Donnell, Las Cruces, NM 88001.

QL KEYBOARD

[illegible] chip socket,

The following article is particularly for those QL users who use touch typing for packet or other input intensive uses of the QL. As they know there are two difficulties with the QL keyboard. One is that the keys sometimes stick a bit when pressed, particulaly if the finger does not go straight down on the key. The other is that the keyboard membrane is one of the weaker points in the mechanical structure of the QL. The interface in the following review is one solution to the problem. This review appeared in SMUG BYTES, the newsletter of the Sinclair Milwaukee Users Group.

QL KEYBOARD 90

Tim Swenson

The QL Keyboard 90 is an IBM keyboard interface for the QL. It allows the QL to use any standard ZX or AT type keyboard. It is made by Computer Technik/Jurgan Falkenburg of Germany.

A QL user in Germany, whom I correspond with, sent me the interface out of the blue. Bob Dyl of the Seacoast Group says it costs 169 DM for overseas shipment (about $80.)

The interface is installed on the inside of the QL, right where the 8049 chip goes. The 8049 will go piggy back on the interface and still be functional.

It only takes about 15 to 30 minutes to install the interface. I took about 20 minutes, going nice and slow. The most delicate part is removing the 80-49 chip without a cup puller. If you go slow with a screwdriver, it will come right out.

The person that sent the interface, also included an extra chip socket, to be used to raise the interface above surrounding parts. The only problem with this, is that it raises the interface so high, I con not fully close the QL. Not a problem for me. I'll just put the QL under a stand I am making for the monitor and not use its keyboard.

Once installed, the interface works great. You can go out and buy a keyboard with the feel that you like. CompUS (for-

merly Soft Warehouse) has an AT type keyboard for $30. Most places want anywhere from $60 to $90 for a keyboard. The mail order places will run from $30 to $60.

The interface is designed to make the IBM keyboard map properly to the QL keyboard. The backspace key is the same as CTRL LEFT ARROW (which still works). The arrow keys on the numeric keypad and the separate arrow keys both work. If you are used to an IBM keyboard from work or home (like me), it lets you use the QL with the same finger movements.

One nice feature of the interface is the reset function. Hit the CTRL, ALT, and DEL at the same time (just like the IBM) and you will reset the QL (exactly the same as hitting the reset button or powering it off).

I've only used my interface for a few hours and I like it. I know that I will not suffer from any more bad QL keyboard membranes. Plus I can sit the keyboard in my lap and back away.

Once you get the switches set for your particular keyboard, everything runs as advertised. I have an AT type keyboard. I have to put the XT/AT switch at AT and the NEW/OLD switch on OLD. The keyboard is switched to AT. If you have any problems with your new keyboard not emulating the full QL keyboard, try various positions of the switches. You're bound to get it right in just a few tries.

Over all, the interface is great. It is fairly easy to install, does not take up any; ports, and is 100% compatible with the QL keyboard, plus dome extra keys. If you plan to use ;your QL for years to come, I recommend that you buy the interface. Keyboard membranes will not be available forever..

PACKET QSO'S

K5XY

Packet activities are one of the most important uses of our computers in amateur radio. However direct QSO's between live operators are becoming quite rare. Yet they do happen. In fact one was the reason for this article.

Two of the most popular QZX authors got together on packet earlier this month. WA6DLI, Bob, on two meters connected to LU8MAD on ten meters through the two to ten meter gateway at West Covina (WESCOV). It was not prearranged but just happened. In fact it was the first out of the country QSO for WA6DLI via the gate-

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way. Bob sent me a printed transcript which showed the characteristics of the usual live packet QSO. There were really two conversations going on at once. The delay in the transmissions is such that while your answer is going back to the other person, you have time to send a question in the next packet. Thus two trains of thought are kept alive and the effective speed of f the QSO is increased.

LU8MAD was using his TS1000 and mentioned that his son is still drawing cartoons of the type that appeared in QZX from time to time. He said that he will be active on ten meters (28.103 MHz) from 1700 - 1900 (until 2400 on good days) for most of December.

The fact remains that packet is a slow means of live communications. Retries do try the operator. This fact, and the data processing capabilities of computers have created entirely new modes of communications with the development of Bulletin Board Stations (BBS) and mail boxes. No longer do you have to depend on schedules or long continuous operating sessions to make contact with a particular ham. One just drips a message into the system and it comes out at the other end neatly stored for the other operator, untouched by human hands. Sort of an automated NTS system. Of course real live hams are closely involved. The backbone nets and "wormholes" take a lot of effort and sophisticated design to make the complications transparent to the casual user like myself.

The modern packet dependance on messages permits our computers to be more useful that they otherwise would be. The sophisticated large scale storage and handling operations are performed by BBS stations designed for this purpose and our computers can handle the input and output chores. Keyboards have been one of the weak points of Sinclair computers. The ZX81 just was not designed for fast typing. The TS2068 was much better, and the QL better yet. But even it has its difficulties. (See the keyboard related article in this issue.) The message orientation packet has developed means that the operator does not have to be a keyboard expert.

This message orientation does mean, however, that you need to know the mail box or packet address of the ham you want to contact. I am now back on packet myself. My address is K5XY@K5DI.NM. I will look forward to packets from any reader. If you will send your packet address, I will publish it in future issues of QZX.

73, K5XY

QZX presents the best software & hardware projects available for the radio amateur. While the contents are believed to be accurate, no warranty is extended on any program or project. No investigation has been made of the claims or reputation of any advertiser. It would be greatly appreciated if all correspondence requiring an answer would be accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope (SASE). Copyright by QZX, 1991. All rights reserved, photocopying by permission only. ISSN 1055-1735

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